Education Report

BRITISH COLUMBIA

BEETLE-FREE PLACES TO PLAY

The mountain pine beetle has damaged trees on school grounds around B.C. To mitigate potential safety concerns, the government has provided the BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA) with $1 million to help school boards remove the affected trees and replant as appropriate.

Read more.

At right: Minister Bond and BCSTA president Penny Tees team up to plant a tree.

HOT TOPIC

The Province introduced legislation last week establishing new class-size limits, new accountability measures and new requirements for consulting with parents and teachers on class organization.

Under the amended legislation:

- No class in grades 4-7 will have more than 30 students except with the consent of the teacher and the approval of the principal and superintendent.
- The district average class size for grades 4-7 must not exceed 28 students.
- No class may have more than three identified special needs students, except with the approval of the principal and superintendent, and after consultation with the teacher.
- No class in grades 8-12 will have more than 30 students except with the approval of the principal and superintendent, and after consultation with the teacher.

The legislation balances class size limits with the demand to maintain flexibility and choice. For example, it may be appropriate to have more than three special needs students in a class. If that's the case, the principal and superintendent must agree, and the teacher affected must be consulted. The same is true of classes in grades 8-12. Classes in those grades may exceed 30, as long as the principal and superintendent agree and the affected teacher is consulted.

The legislation also strengthens the role of teachers in class organization while giving parents more say about class size and composition. Principals will be required to consult with their school planning council on class organization each year.

The new class-size limits, consulting requirements and accountability measures, together with record funding levels, will help ensure all students have the chance to succeed. Since 2000-01, the Province has increased funding to public schools by nearly $460 million, while enrolment has declined by more than 30,000 students.

Five sites, five themes, one stimulating conversation

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Message from Minister Shirley Bond

Honourable Shirley Bond Minister of Education

Spring has been a busy but rewarding season. I've met with a lot of people who are very passionate about education.

It is always great to talk to students, and listen to their ideas and concerns. So on April 28 I held a Conversation with the Minister, the first-ever full-day meeting between a minister and students.

Not long before that, I hosted another first: a full-day meeting of District Parent Advisory Council chairs. I also had the pleasure of attending three annual conferences – the Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils, the Library Association, and the School Trustees Association. While at the trustees' conference, I met with all board chairs – another gathering that has never happened before.

In addition to these group-specific meetings, I have helped bring many partners, including teachers, together. One meeting was to discuss student-centered leadership – a system in use in several school districts.

Today, I am meeting with principals and vice-principals at their May issues forum in Vancouver.

Through these conversations and an ongoing constructive dialogue we will find more – and more effective – ways to work together and serve our students, improving what is already one of the world's best K–12 education systems.

Reading Corner

The Kids Book of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada is a balanced and informative non-fiction title featuring seven major Aboriginal groups: the Northwest Coast, Plateau, Plains, Arctic, Sub-arctic, Eastern Woodland Iroquoians, and, the Eastern Woodlands Algonquians. Our diversity is a resource, and here is a volume that can bolster all students' understanding, compassion and pride. This book is suitable for students in Grades 3 - 6.

The Kids Book of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada
Written by Diane Silvey
Illustrated by John Mantha